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THE FIVE CIVILIZED TRIBES OF OKLAHOMA

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Indians

Report on Social and Economic Conditions

by ANGIE DEBO

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"These Indians, who less than fifty years ago owned half of what is now the State of Oklahoma, live in appalling poverty."

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Report on Social and Economic Conditions

by

ANGIE DEBO

Angie Debo moved with her parents to the Territory of Oklahoma in early childhood, and grew up there against a background of Indian and pioneer life. She was in the first graduating class of the village high school at Marshall in 1913; graduated from the University of Oklahoma in 1918; and received her master's degree from the University of Chicago in 1924, and her doctorate from the University of Oklahoma in 1933—all this time alternating her own education with periods of rural school, high school, and college teaching.

Miss Debo has had wide experience in directing research work. She served as assistant to Grant Foreman on a statewide project collecting reminiscences of old time Indians and pioneers; and she was state supervisor of the Federal Writers' Project, which produced the Oklahoma volume of the American Guide Series. At present she is on the library staff of the Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College.

Books by Angie Debo on

THE FIVE CIVILIZED TRIBES:

The Rise and Fall of the Choctaw Republic
Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1934

And Still The Waters Run
Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1940

The Road to Disappearance
Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1941

Other Books by Angie Debo:

Tulsa: From Creek Town to Oil Capital
Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1943

Prairie City
New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1944

Oklahoma: Foot-loose and Fancy-free
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As a non-sectarian and non-partisan organization supported by the voluntary contributions of its members and friends:

Seeks to promote the spiritual, moral, and material welfare of the Indians and to protect their Legal Rights;

Maintains close contact with Indians and reservation conditions; keeps in close touch with Governmental Indian Affairs; conducts field studies to get facts for presentation to the public, to Congress and to the Indian Bureau;

Co-operates with Church Boards and Educational and Welfare Agencies doing work for or among Indians;

Helps to arouse and form public opinion in support of justice for Indian people through its bulletin, INDIAN TRUTH, and other publications, by public addresses, and by the volunteer work of Board members.

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PREFACE

I am grateful to the Indian Rights Association for the opportunity of adding this sequel to *And Still the Waters Run.* That book closed with a question. Could the lost fullbloods of the Five Tribes be saved? The question remained in my own mind until I had the privilege of making this survey. It was a great personal satisfaction to find the answer.

I am grateful also to my friends, Henderson and Dorothy Leake, who encouraged me to undertake the work, watched its progress with unfailing interest, and read and criticized my final report. And always in the background was the support of Dr. Henry G. Bennett, president of Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College, who has never lost in larger responsibilities his awareness of the Indian problem; and of Mr. Edmon Low, librarian of the College, whose intellectual alertness is a constant stimulus to creative effort.

In the field I was dependent upon the good will of devoted missionaries, especially Mrs. John Harris of Vian, Rev. and Mrs. R. M. Firebaugh of Hugo, and Rev. Hampton Anderson of Atoka; and upon the unfailing co-operation of Indian service employees, who assisted me in every possible way, but made no attempt to influence my thinking. Most of all I want to express appreciation to my mother, who remained at home alone at an age when she might have been expected to require the attendance of her only daughter.

This survey also closes with a question. These Indians can be saved, but will sufficient effort be made to save them? To the readers of this report I am leaving the final answer.

ANGIE DEBO

Stillwater, Oklahoma

March 4, 1950

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Chapter I

THE BACKGROUND OF THE SURVEY

A previous study[1] has shown how the Indians of the Five Civilized Tribes—Cherokees, Choctaws, Chickasaws, Creeks, and Seminoles—were forced at the turn of the century to merge their identity with the developing commonwealth of Oklahoma. They had owned the eastern half of the present state, supporting themselves by farming and stock-raising, governing themselves under written constitutions, maintaining comprehensive school systems, and attending the Presbyterian, Methodist, and Baptist churches that dotted their settlements. But their country was filling rapidly with non-Indians: 295,919 whites and 36,852 Negroes to 51,457 Indians by the census of 1900. Congress therefore passed a series of laws under which their tribal governments were dissolved, their land holdings were broken up into individual allotments, their public funds were divided per capita, and they became citizens of the United States and subsequently of the state of Oklahoma.

Many of them made satisfactory adjustments. They became leaders of the new composite society, and their traditions and their history became an important part of the state's cultural heritage[2]. This fact is of basic significance. Oklahoma's proud acceptance of the Indians can be relied upon as an asset in any plan for rehabilitation.

But the majority of the fullbloods were unable to make the transition. Their ownership of individual farms by fee simple title subjected them to mortgages, sales, tax liens, long term leases, and other forms of alienation, all completely outside their experience. As citizens they were protected theoretically by laws and courts, which they did not understand and could not use; actually the whole legal system of Eastern Oklahoma was warped to strip them of their property. Misrepresentation, power of attorney, forgery, kidnaping, even murder were employed to obtain their land, or they were placed under guardianship and plundered through the probate courts.

A modicum of their property was saved through a law enacted by Congress placing tax exemption and restrictions against alienation on the entire allotments of Indians of three-fourths or more of tribal blood, on a portion of the allotments of those whose quantum of blood was one-half or more and less than three-fourths; but these restrictions could be removed, and in general they expired upon the death of the allottee.

1 Angie Debo, *And Still the Waters Run* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1940).

2 This has been discussed more fully in *ibid.*, pp. 290-94; and in Angie Debo, *Oklahoma: Footloose and Fancy-Free* (Norman, Oklahoma, 1949), pp. 141, 145, 156 and *passim*, 219 ff.

These Indians had come from a wooded area—the Gulf and Southern Appalachian region—and in general they had chosen to live in the timber. The most active life of the Cherokees had centered in the inaccessible Ozark hill country east of the Grand River, the present Delaware, Cherokee, Adair, and Sequoyah counties. The Choctaws and Chickasaws had owned in common the eastern two-thirds of southern Oklahoma. The Choctaws were distributed through the eastern half of this tract—the rugged pine-clad mountains and the timbered river valleys that fringed them—while the Chickasaws found sheltered dwelling sites in the broken eastern portion of the region to the west. The Creeks were concentrated along the valleys of the rivers that crossed their country, good land but subject to overflow, while their cattle ranged in the scrub timber that covered the hilly upland. The small area belonging to the Seminoles—most of the present Seminole County—was a rough scrub-timbered tract with no level land worth mentioning.

The Government allotting agency tried, so far as the white man's rectangular surveying system would permit, to include each Indian's farmstead in his allotment. With the Creeks this patented tract was a compact 160 acres including some good agricultural land, though the rich Arkansas valley was largely taken by Negro allottees, their former slaves. The Seminoles also received fairly compact allotments, varying in size from 60 to 240 acres according to the quality of the land. But the members of the other tribes usually received a small acreage around their cabins plus a tract of good agricultural land in the west. Thus, a Cherokee hill dweller became the bewildered owner of some land he had never seen on the Caney. A Choctaw living in the mountains of McCurtain County might own a rich but unvalued farm two hundred miles away near Pauls Valley. The white exploiters had plans for the acquisition of this "surplus" land—indeed it was they who had influenced the selection—but when Congress imposed the restrictions they had to be content with long term leases until they could obtain title upon the death of the allottee[3].

The whole allotment process had been forced upon an unwilling people, grieving for their old way of life. When the new society surged around them, putting the good level land under cultivation, laying out cities, developing oil fields, building a state, they retired more than ever to their mountains or scrub timber. Here their educational progress was arrested, for their tribal schools had been absorbed by the state educational system, and the fullblood neighborhoods with restricted land presented an inadequate local tax base. Their social life stagnated, for they had lost the tribal institutions in which they had participated so freely. The breaking up of their land into arbitrary units marked by surveyors' lines had disrupted their simple agriculture; while their per capita shares of tribal funds and the unconscionably small payments that came to them from signing a

3 Debo, *And Still the Waters Run*, pp. 48-51, 94-98.

deed or a lease encouraged idleness and dependence. And a whole generation born after the rolls were closed was growing up without land and without hope.

Nobody worried about it. Public sentiment in Oklahoma was dominated by the spoils of the allotment system and demands for the removal of the remaining restrictions. The federal agencies at first were preoccupied with the herculean task of dividing an area the size of South Carolina into equal individual shares; then—as a horde of vultures descended upon these pickings—with a somewhat half-hearted attempt to save a portion of the allottees' property. It was not until about 1930 that several surveys were made of the living conditions in the fullblood settlements. Here in the hill country the Indians were found to be actually starving, in a few extreme cases even starving to death. Then began a policy of rehabilitation.

In 1930 the Extension Division of the Indian Office came into official existence, and for the first time trained agricultural agents, home economists, and social case workers undertook the elevation of the fullblood communities. Then the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act of 1936 provided for loans to individuals and co-operative associations and for the purchase of land to be held in trust by the Government for the use of tribal groups. At the same time the state enacted major social legislation; and the new services were extended without discrimination to its Indian citizens.

All this seemed very hopeful in prospect; and this hope was expressed in the study previously mentioned. But enough time has now elapsed for taking stock. In the spring of 1949 I was requested by the Indian Rights Association to make a survey of present social and economic conditions in the fullblood settlements. In practice this meant reporting on the effect of the new policy introduced in the 1930's.

The survey was conducted in the summer of 1949. Some time was spent at the Agency in Muskogee collecting statistical information, but most of the work was done in the field. Remote cabins were visited in hidden valleys back from the almost impassible roads that wind through the mountains, or in the brushy tangles that break the plains. Here many interviews took place on rustic porches or inside rude dwellings where chickens wandered in and out through unscreened doors, or sudden showers dripped into every available vessel through leaky roofs. Initial contacts were made through persons the Indians knew and trusted—missionaries and Agency field workers—and no attempt was made to explain the purpose of the visit. But in this relaxed atmosphere of friendly conversation many facts appeared that make up the fabric of their life. As the interviews multiplied, these facts began to fit into a pattern.

Chapter II

POOR INDIANS ON POOR LAND

These Indians, who less than fifty years ago owned half of what is now the state of Oklahoma, live in appalling poverty. This varies somewhat from tribe to tribe. The Cherokees have been the hardest hit. The whole beautiful region east of the Grand River is one vast slum. The Choctaws and Chickasaws own more property, but they make the poorest use of their resources. The Creeks with their more compact land holdings have retained more of their capacity for self support. They are in the most hopeful situation of all the tribes. The Seminoles have less economic skill, but they are still supported to a certain extent by the spectacular oil development of their county.

Throughout the hill country the Indians live in log cabins as their ancestors did a century ago—with this difference: the average present day Indian apparently never builds a new cabin or repairs an old one. (This may have been brought about by a former Agency practice of selling a portion of the Indian's allotment and using the proceeds in hiring somebody to build him a house.) Most of them raise gardens and the women know how to can vegetables and fruit; but the orchards that surrounded their dwellings in tribal days have disappeared. They carry their water from springs, and they do their laundry in the back yard. But although a few of the women are slatterns, the majority keep their dilapidated houses surprisingly neat. The washings that hang on their lines are clean, their beds are clean, and there are flowers blooming in their yards. And although flies are not plentiful—probably because they have no stables or privies as breeding places—their sleeping babies are invariably protected with mosquito bar. Surely this is an important asset to be used in any attempt to improve their condition.

Thanks to the opportunities of war and post-war industry, most of these families have some members working in an Oklahoma or a West Coast city. Some of these have been sustaining themselves outside for many years. And of those who remain in the hills many of the men—at least in summer, when the survey was made—find some work as unskilled laborers cutting timber, building electric power lines, quarrying rock, constructing flood control dams. The women and children and some of the men work in the commercial truck gardens and berry patches of the area, or even pick wild berries for sale. Apparently at this time none of the Indians is hungry—at least in summer.

They still own 930,833 acres of allotted land; and 326,935 acres of inherited land is still in the possession of the heirs. This adds up to 1,257,768 acres. Most of this is non-taxable[1]. What it would average per capita is difficult to determine. When the Indians lost their tribal identity they ceased to exist in population statistics. The census enumerations are grossly inaccurate. The Indian service knows only the ones with whom it makes contacts. An estimate made in 1950 set the number of quarter-bloods or over at 25,600 Cherokees, 16,000 Choctaws, 3,200 Chickasaws, 16,640 Creeks, and 2,560 Seminoles—a total of 64,000. It is my considered judgment that practically all of these are half-bloods or over. The Agency classification is influenced by the rolls made at the time of allotment, which listed fullblood Indians of mixed tribal descent as half-bloods or even quarter-bloods according to the citizenship of the mother or maternal grandmother.

Thus, the average landed possession is almost twenty acres per capita, probably about one hundred acres to a family. At first glance this might seem fairly ample. It is almost exactly the same as the land base for the whole population of Oklahoma. But 223,284 acres is in the Cherokee Ozark counties; another 141,496 acres lies in the cut-over pine area of the Choctaw mountains; and most of the remainder consists of the blackjack-postoak jungle that covers the belt of ragged hills stretching between the rivers to the west. Except in the Creek country—and to a certain extent even there—one can be fairly certain in approaching an Indian settlement to find almost worthless land. A good many Choctaw and a few Cherokee hill dwellers still own some of their good prairie "surplus," but the idea of migrating to that distant region is as foreign to their experience as it would be for a white Oklahoma farmer to settle among the Eskimos.

Even these inadequate land holdings are in the hands of an aging generation. The last rolls are dated March 4, 1906; thus the youngest allottees are well along in their forties. Younger than that they are completely landless except for the inherited land still in the family possession. The allotments are shrinking, mainly by death, to a lesser extent through removal of restrictions, at the rate of 35,000 acres a year. And the inherited land is now being sold more rapidly than the allotted land is passing into inheritance status, so that even this acreage is shrinking slightly.

An attempt was made to check this loss by legislation enacted January 27, 1933. This law provided that when the entire interest in restricted land should be inherited by restricted Indians, it should remain restricted during their lifetime up to 1956; and the courts decided that "restricted" Indians were Indians of one-half or more quantum of blood, whether enrolled or born after the enrollment period. These heirs also were permitted to establish their quantum of blood by competent evidence, and Indian blood rather than tribal blood was the determining factor[2]. Thus, land inherited by these

1 These figures were obtained from the Agency files; they are dated April 30, 1949.
2 47 U. S. Stat. 777; Glenn et al. *v.* Lewis et al. 105 Fed. 398.

Indians could be alienated only with the approval of the Department, except that there was some technical uncertainty as to whether the law applied to fullbloods. This question was never judicially determined, but the uncertainty did have the effect of slowing up fullblood as well as mixed blood sales.

This legislation had been enacted over strong opposition from Oklahoma[3], and it was mainly through Oklahoma initiative that it was repealed August 4, 1947. The new law places all conveyances of inherited land by restricted Indians in the county court, but it provides safeguards in published notice, open hearing, and recorded evidence. The Five Tribes Agency is notified through its probate attorneys, who may present evidence as to the value of the land, and who have the right of appeal to the district court[4].

There is no doubt that this law has speeded up the sale of Indian land. And no matter how conscientious the judge, or how vigilant the probate attorney in obtaining a fair price, the victims of these forced sales are thrown adrift in the alien society that flooded their lowlands and now is lapping at their remaining islands. For they are forced sales. If one grandchild decides to sell his 1/24 interest in the family estate, the other heirs have no recourse. The purchase of his interest is completely beyond their financial resources. This is more tragically apparent in the Indian settlements than in the correct formal atmosphere of the courtroom or in the study of statutes and statistics.

I talked with scores of families living on undivided inherited land, paying no rent, squatting there as a natural right. Most of them seemed not to realize the precarious nature of their tenure, or to look ahead to the day when their refuge would crumble beneath their feet. Even after a generation of patented individual titles, they still think of the use of land as free, like the air they breathe; only the improvements, as in the old days under tribal law, are personal possessions. An elderly Choctaw woman who had lost her allotment, recently used a small sum of money that fell into her hands to build herself a snug little house on the land of another Indian. The protests of a state social worker were so much wasted breath. It was *her* house, wasn't it? And how could anybody sell *her* house?

A few of these families visited were fairly secure by white law as well as Indian custom. An industrious young Cherokee who was being guided into some very successful farming of the family estate had only his widowed sister living with her children on another portion of the tract, and the land was giving both families adequate support. "And they are the only heirs; I don't have to worry about its being sold from under them," said the farm management supervisor of the Indian service. But in another case five brothers were living on their deceased father's allotment—sixty acres of poor land in the Cherokee hills that would hardly have supported one family.

3 Debo, *And Still the Waters Run*, pp. 361-64.
4 61 U. S. Stat. 731.

Their families were large—one with eleven children, almost unbelievably ragged. The five houses were poverty-stricken hovels, but family pride still centered there, for flowers were blooming in the yards. Even this land base was breaking up, for there were fifteen heirs and a forced sale was imminent. (The mother's land went three months before.) The same farm management supervisor was lying awake nights mulling over the questions: Where will they go? How will they live? No answer was in sight. An honest county judge—a Cherokee himself, who looks like a fullblood—would see that the land sold for its full three dollars an acre value, but five families would still be homeless.

The plight of the landless Indians is more desperate in the Cherokee hills than elsewhere. The allotments of this numerous tribe were small to start with; then the land was all taken before the division was completed, so that twenty-five hundred citizens, mostly fullbloods and new-born infants, received only a small cash payment; now the thin mountain soil has become so eroded that it will no longer produce field crops; and there is always the inexorable shrinking of acreage. Thus, the combined Cherokee holdings simply will not support the population.

The farm management supervisor has recently made a very careful survey of one Cherokee community. It centers around Nicut, once a prosperous small town in the hills northeast of Sallisaw. It was one of the first settlements made by the Cherokees when they came to Oklahoma more than a century ago. Indeed, it is only five or six miles from the cabin where the great Sequoyah lived, and taught his people to read and write their language. High on a hill stands a church, where the strong religious feeling of the Cherokees has centered since these earliest years. The first settlers cleared the level places and practiced a sufficient agriculture, raising cotton for their homespun garments, and corn for their food and feed for their live stock running the range. Later, as white enterprise began to penetrate the hills, the land was placed under more intensive cultivation and lumbering became important. Now the marketable timber is gone, and the soil is gone.

Today, one hundred families get their mail at what remains of the town. Seventy-five of these are Indian families, all of a high degree of Indian blood. Most of them belong to the landless generation. They are squatting on the allotments of friends and relatives. Only about one-fifth of the land of the six-mile-square surveyor's township still remains in Indian ownership. A map of the area shows a graphic picture of Indian dwellings crowded on these contracted holdings. One generous old woman furnishes asylum to six families living in miserable cabins on her sixty acres. One of these cabins houses fourteen people.

Much of the land lost to the Indians has been bought up by non-residents, who are fencing it for cattle. They estimate about twenty acres to the animal—but the Indians are living on a much smaller per capita acreage than these cattle! Needless to say, it is not supporting them. Half

of the families are living on Public Assistance: 27 on aid to dependent children, 17 on old-age assistance, 3 on aid to the blind. Ten others receive pensions from the two World Wars[5].

The landless Choctaws have developed a special form of squatting. Always a religious people, they have collected on their church grounds, using the camp houses that were erected in happier days for their week-end or week-long meetings. They live in a close-knit fellowship essentially tribal; and their support also comes from Public Assistance and veterans' benefits. The church settlements exist to a smaller extent among the Chickasaws and Creeks. The destitute among the Seminoles usually manage to take refuge with some oil beneficiary, where all combine to eat him out of his windfall.

There are of course many "landless" Indians of all these tribes who feel no lack. They make their living in the world outside—at skilled or unskilled labor, in the professions, in business. They constitute no problem, and require no rehabilitation. But the majority are agrarian minded; whether well fed or starving, they will stay on the land. But they lack not only farms, but experience, initiative, and capital.

When the Extension Division was first set up at the Agency, the task seemed hopeless. Even now one may find a settlement of more than one hundred Cherokees with only one wagon and team—a poor team and a wagon from a discarded automobile chassis. In the mountains of Pushmataha County is a somewhat smaller Choctaw group with only one wagon, owned by a widow. The whole neighborhood uses it—when it is in condition to use; often it is too broken down to carry a load. These Choctaws own land far to the west, and live inadequately on rentals. Their homes are miserable log cabins.

Obviously, the influence of even trained agricultural agents was not sufficient to set such people up in farming. Their first opportunity for constructive rehabilitation came through the loan provisions of the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act. Here the results have been uneven, but the success achieved in many cases furnishes incontestable proof of the utility of the program. Some of these developments need to be traced in detail, because they point the way to an ultimate solution of the Indians' problem.

5 The report of this survey may be found in a mimeographed booklet entitled "Progress and Problems" by Five Tribes Superintendent W. O. Roberts.

Chapter III

THE FARM LOAN POLICY IN THE OZARKS

The most spectacular result of the loan policy is the establishment of a strawberry industry among the Cherokee hill dwellers. It all started with a piece of community work that brought new life to a hopeless settlement.

In the summer of 1935 an order went out from the Washington office requiring the boarding school teachers to live and work for six weeks in Indian neighborhoods. With no planning, no previous experience, it is not surprising that most of these efforts failed to accomplish anything permanent. The surprising fact is that one succeeded. The success was due to the practical industry and the warm human understanding of Mrs. Bessie Hunt of the Sequoyah Training School, and to the loyal backing of her husband, Lola B. Hunt, who teaches shop mechanics at the same school.

Mrs. Hunt chose to work at Lyons Switch, an abandoned station on the railroad that winds down a mountain stream in Adair County, twelve miles southwest of Stilwell. She found a place to live with a fullblood Cherokee woman, an elderly matriarch of the old time, who still ran a little store and lived in the big house where she had reared her family and innumerable homeless children. But the type of community work to be undertaken was obscure.

The neighborhood was split into two factions, one more or less criminal. If a member of the more law-abiding faction left his premises, he was likely on his return to find a building had been set on fire or the chickens stolen. There was a little church in the woods, but the young people found no attraction there. Their only social life consisted of dances where knife fights were frequent, and killings sometimes occurred. The public school had little influence. Its tax base was poor land dotted with tax-free allotments. The Indian children stayed away through parental indifference, language handicap, and lack of suitable clothing and food for the noonday meal.

Mrs. Hunt collected the children at the schoolhouse for recreation. She visited in the homes—walking the woodland trails—and became acquainted with the people. With Mr. Hunt, who drove out forty miles from Sequoyah, she attended the little church. Finally, some Indian made the timid suggestion that they build a community meeting place. Then a Sequoyah ex-student donated a piece of land, an ideal site near a spring. Mrs. Hunt transferred her recreation group there. She called a meeting and asked about building material. All withdrew and held a private conversation in Cherokee. Mrs. Hunt waited, her spirits falling; she was sure they were talking against her plan. But at the close they shifted back to English and announced that they had decided to furnish logs. The men cut the pines and carried them to the place, or they accepted hauling offers from well-wishing

white neighbors. These they hewed for the puncheon floor. Mrs. Hunt with the help of the women and children brought stones and clay from the hillside and with Mr. Hunt to show them how, they built a lime kiln; and Mr. Hunt found a grate from his Sequoyah shop. An elderly Indian selected the rock for burning. The big boys chopped wood for the fire and watched it for three days and nights. Thus they got their lime. Sand was abundant.

By this time the work on the house had superseded all other recreation. The factions had disappeared. Men, women, and children came and stayed on the grounds all day. Mrs. Hunt had suggested that they bring their lunches; and when noon came, they disappeared in the woods. It was Mr. Hunt who discovered that they were not eating, that in fact they had nothing to eat. (At home they were probably eating ground corn made into a sort of gruel.) He understood the lassitude that had slowed down their work each afternoon. He got some meat canned in a WPA project and some flour. The women baked bread, and all ate a real meal together. The lassitude immediately disappeared.

A fine old man in his seventies, who had built log houses in former days, contributed his skill in planning the building. Mrs. Hunt discovered that it was impossible to assign jobs. And Indian would sit for hours, or perhaps for days, watching the others work. Then when he saw something he was sure he could do, he would rise and take over. One old man sitting by a tree, suddenly got up and began splitting clapboards for the roof. An old woman, unable to speak English, carried water. She made so many trips that she wore a path to the spring, 350 yards away, up the side of a mountain. Other women built a privy.

Mr. Hunt brought some of his boys out from Sequoyah and helped lay the stone foundation. Then the walls began to rise, one long room and a kitchen. The men split blocks and drove the pieces in between the logs for chinking. At the schoolhouse they found discarded windows that could be used. But they had to purchase some materials, and these required money. They held a meeting—they were having meetings all the time now —and decided to have a musical program at the schoolhouse. Cherokees are natural singers, and they play simple instruments easily. The community arranged some numbers, and the music teacher at Sequoyah brought out some of her pupils. A ten cent admission and a packed audience of Indian and white hill dwellers netted eight or nine dollars. With this they bought nails; some lumber for rafters, which Mr. Hunt hauled in the school truck from a near-by sawmill; and cement to mix with their lime and sand for mortar to plaster the chinked spaces between the logs. Mrs. Hunt's original six weeks had been extended to three months, but this time also was drawing short, and so they spent the rest of their money for the only outside labor they used, hiring a man for a day and a half to build the stone fireplace. The men constructed some rough furniture, and the women made curtains

for the windows and drinking cups from tin cans.

When the work was completed they planned a celebration. Everybody in the community came, white and Indian. They brought what food they could from their homes. The women made potato salad in a big wash kettle. They had a whole beef, bought by the Hunts with what help the Indians could give, and barbecued by an old-time Indian. They had ball games and horseshoe pitching. They listened to speeches—one from Superintendent A. M. Landman, who drove out from Muskogee to join in their rejoicing. When the day was over, they gathered around the fireplace—many stayed all night—singing Cherokee songs, Christian words set to strange, wild melodies. The old man who had served as informal foreman of construction said to Mrs. Hunt: "Well, I've enjoyed this. I expect this is the last house I'll ever build." Mrs. Hunt told him, "This building is like a monument; it will stand here after you are gone." At her words the tears rolled down his cheeks. He died shortly after, and his funeral was held in the building he had planned.

The community house received a maximum of use. Religious services in which the whole settlement joined were started there even before it was completed. There were boxing matches, and there were field days with baseball games and other athletic contests and six hundred people—Indians and their white neighbors—in attendance. In March, 1936, the Agency field service assisted in forming a farm chapter there. This group held meetings once a week, and with tools loaned by the Indian service they planed the floor and improved the furniture. Also on their meeting day they planted a community garden; and the county home demonstration agent came out and showed the women how to can their produce. The building was never locked, but there was never an instance of vandalism.

Thus one group of Cherokee fullbloods was ready for the practical operation of the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act. In October, 1937, young Herbert Kinnard was sent to Stilwell to train them in farming. He had grown up on a farm in southwestern Oklahoma, graduated in 1932 from the Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College, and entered the Five Tribes extension service, where he spent most of his time giving futile agricultural advice to a people entirely without capital, and distributing the Red Cross and other relief that alone kept them from starving to death. Then shortly after he came to Stilwell the loans became available, the first ones in the Five Tribes area being made early in 1938. The law had authorized the formation of co-operatives, and here was Lyons Switch united and ready.

The work animals of the entire settlement totaled one horse owned by the old preacher, and even if farm equipment had been available the land was too rough for cultivation. Mr. Kinnard analysed the mantle of loose rock that covers these "flint hills" and concluded it would grow strawberries; he studied as closely the character of his Indians and decided they

were adapted to the painstaking hand work. He held many meetings in the community house—with the Hunts driving out and contributing their advice —and organized his co-operative. They borrowed $2800 with which they bought a team and paid other necessary expenses, but much of the money was advanced to the members for food, to be deducted from their shares of the profits. They set out twenty acres, which was later increased to forty.

The first year was crucial: back-breaking work, with only the promise of a next year's crop to a people who had never experienced success. (Mr. Hunt had found by a survey that the average cash income of a Cherokee hill family was $54 a year.) All the techniques were new. One day a mischievous white boy told an Indian that the commercial fertilizer he was being taught to apply would make his hands come off; and Mr. Kinnard next found his pupil at the spring washing his hands and muttering a Cherokee incantation. But the venture succeeded. The co-operative paid its debt in full—a total of $3,200—and paid each of its member families an average profit of six hundred dollars a year. It was dissolved in 1946 with complete goodwill, and the members branched out into individual growing.

Strawberry raising around Stilwell is now an important Oklahoma industry—important enough for an annual civic festival with speeches and pageantry. And the local banker estimates that over half the proceeds of this crop goes to Indians. Mr. Kinnard had 150 families growing berries in 1949, and expected to have three hundred the next year. The average family raises from two to four acres, and clears from six to eight hundred dollars annually. All these ventures are started by small loans, usually about five hundred dollars. And it is not only these loans that are repaid; I talked with a middle-aged Cherokee, who had cleared fifteen hundred dollars as his season's profit, and paid off debts he had owed at the store for thirty years.

The required equipment is "a Georgia stock, a crook-necked hoe, and a fifteen-year-old mule." First the scrub timber is cleared off, sometimes from hillsides so steep that one looking up from below half expects to see the workers roll down out of their fields. But here is one place where soil erosion will never be a problem, for the fields are nothing but rock piles. In planting, the Indian carries a pail of soil and a pail of water. He throws out the largest stones, pushes the smaller ones aside with a blow of a dull ax to form a triangular hole, and places a handful of soil in the depression; then he sets his plant and waters it. The roots eventually find their way between the rock fragments, but commercial fertilizer is necessary. In times of drought, water is pumped up from the creeks. A group of neighbors own a pump together, and each user pays by the acre. The Indians carry on all this work with infinite patience, kneeling to plant and to guide the runners, stooping to pull out the weeds, staying up all night in watering, picking and arranging the berries with meticulous care.

The growers still live simply in their log cabins, but they have developed

a pride and independence they have not felt since their old tribal days. There has been a marked decrease in drunkenness and crime. They have been quick to grasp scientific practices—one is surprised to hear an unschooled elderly fullblood say he thinks his land needs sodium nitrate. So far there have been no marketing difficulties; but Mr. Kinnard is forming a marketing co-operative to guard against a possible future slump.

The success of the Indian growers has had its inevitable influence on outside investors. A few have already come in and made large scale plantings. They use Indian labor, the best possible labor, for nobody but an Indian would pick and arrange a box of berries with an eye to artistic effect. Under their bidding the price of an undeveloped Ozark rock pile has gone up from fifty cents to three dollars an acre. There is real danger here. As the inheritance sales continue, there is every prospect of a landless people living in squalor and working on large strawberry farms of white owners. This would be the final irony: the descendants of a great people, pushed into the hills by white encroachment, and then reduced to peonage in their last refuge. Many books have been written about the cultural and economic achievements of the Cherokees. Is this to be the final chapter?

Even with those Indians who own land, Mr. Kinnard fears the effects of a one-crop agriculture. He has encouraged the growth of cattle herds, the raising and canning of food, the commercial growing of beans, cucumbers, tomatoes, and boysenberries; and is experimenting with one large apple orchard. But obviously his services and the loan policy of the Government can extend only to those Indians with available land. White absentee owners have suggested a system of tenantry by which they would furnish the capital, the Indians would perform the labor and receive half the produce, and he would furnish the expert guidance. He has rejected these suggestions. Again the end would be a system of peonage.

Even without the land shortage Mr. Kinnard's work has the obvious limitation of one man's time and strength. Thus, as he drives about visiting the well-kept plots where Cherokees are living once more in simple self sufficiency, this farm management supervisor is haunted by the realization that he is helping only four or five hundred out of a needy six thousand. (The Nicut community, for example, has not even been touched.) At the end of the fiscal year 1948[1] there had been 363 loans made in Adair County since the program started, and about half that number in each of the adjoining hill counties. These 363 loans totaled $168,567.49, of which $120,329.94 had been repaid ($2,773.57 through foreclosure), $47,821.11 was still outstanding, and only $416.44 had been charged off as lost. A remarkable record by adding machine standards, but more remarkable in terms of contented people living on their land.

1 At the time the survey was made, the 1949 figures were not available; later it seemed better to retain the 1948 figures because educational loans were included in the statistics after that date.

Chapter IV

FARM LOANS IN OTHER AREAS

All loans in the Five Tribes area are made by county credit associations in which the borrowers become members and share holders. Only Indians of one-fourth or more quantum of blood are eligible; actually 53 per cent of the loan clients are fullbloods, and only 8 per cent of less than half blood. Each association elects five directors, who pass on loan applications—in practice with the advice of the farm management supervisor—for the final approval of the Agency. It borrows money from the Government at 1 per cent interest and loans it to members at 4 per cent. Out of this profit it pays the expense of operation and any losses through bad debts. At present there are fourteen active associations. Up to the end of the fiscal year 1948 they had borrowed in cumulative figures $906,864.93, of which $590,454.99 had been repaid ($24,578.01 through foreclosure), $312,709.43 was still outstanding, and the total loss was $3,700.51. Again an outstanding record of repayment, when one remembers that not one in twenty of the borrowers would be considered a safe risk by his current economic status. The lending agency has to guess that a poverty-stricken Indian entirely without experience or capital would succeed in farming if given a chance.

The guesses, as the foreclosures and bad debts indicate, have not been 100 per cent accurate. I found one Choctaw area where the farm management supervisor apparently had no real success to show. In another Choctaw section a disillusioned director of the county credit association, a very able and prominent Choctaw, said he had known only one Indian who really profited by the loan policy and embarked on a more successful scale of farming. The others had used the money for living expenses, paid it back with sweat and tears, and reverted to their former status. This county had made a total of thirty-nine loans, but all the fullblood settlements I saw were grouped in hovels around the churches, or hidden in scrub timber, stagnant areas untouched by the whole rehabilitation program.

The success or failure of this policy depends largely upon the personality of the farm management supervisor, and the length of his tenure in one area. Other factors are such special circumstances as the fortunate resurgence of community spirit at Lyons Switch. For it requires a demonstration, and how can one start the initial effort? Recently a Chickasaw congregation on its own initiative raised co-operatively a patch of peanuts on the land of a member to defray its church expenses. A discouraged Agency extension worker and a far-seeing Choctaw minister both expressed a hope that such projects might be the entering wedge opening the door to economic opportunity. Too many Choctaws and Chickasaws simply do not see any reason to make an effort. And yet even among them are some excellent farmers who got their start through Government loans.

In the comparatively level land around Idabel, where wealthy mixed bloods more than a century ago laid out their great cotton plantations, are eroded, leached out, abandoned fields grown up to brush, and requiring extensive fertilization to bring them back into production. Here I talked with fullblood, or apparently fullblood, Choctaws who were producing good field crops, raising fine beef or dairy herds, and reclaiming their land through scientific conservation practices.

It was a revelation to hear a Choctaw settled on eighty acres of family land talk in this wise to the farm management supervisor: "I'm getting ready to improve that pasture. I'm going to start at the far end and clear out the brush and make it good. I need to mow this end to kill the weeds. I'm going to get a mower. And what do you think of putting on fertilizer and sowing it to lespedeza?" He had accumulated a good dairy herd, and was raising a fine bunch of shoats in an enclosure he had fenced; and he had enlarged his house and built a porch. His wife was canning fruit. The house was neat. The yard also was neat, though in the absence of a mower they had stretched a wire around it and cropped the grass by mule power. And yet, before they had embarked on the loan program, their farming experience had been limited to planting a patch of corn for the native hominy dish.

In the mountains Choctaw fullbloods have gone into the cattle business, raising their feed in the valleys and using the free range. The initial loan of seven or eight hundred dollars buys a team and wagon and some farm implements, three or four cows, and perhaps a sewing machine and a stove for the wife. Some with this start have accumulated good herds; a few have even bought land of their own. Still other successful Choctaw farmers are raising peanuts, cotton, and feed crops in the good land around Durant. Usually these are mixed bloods, and they have become completely integrated into the white life of the community. But the beginning was always the same story; lacking experience, lacking equipment, they had been unable to use their landed resources.

The most successful farmers of all may be found among the Creeks. Here Al Feighny of Holdenville has had the longest tenure of any farm management supervisor. And he has seen results of an entirely different kind but fully as dramatic as Herbert Kinnard has seen among the Cherokees. The Creeks, with their good land, had never reached the poverty and despair of the Cherokee hill dwellers; and they had escaped the sterile homestead and distant "surplus" combination that taught the Choctaws to starve on rentals. Most of them were farming on a scale too small for profit, but they *were* farming. The loans gave them the required start, and the farm management supervisor gave them the necessary training. No better farming can be found anywhere, whether by Indian or white, than is done by some of these Creek loan clients.

At the time the loan policy started, a young landless Creek—who looks like a fullblood—was living on a fine forty-acre tract belonging to another

Creek, farming inadequately with one team. Then one of his horses died in the midst of the busy season. Completely baffled, he came diffidently to Mr. Feighny. His work could not wait for the two or three weeks required to pass on a loan application. Mr. Feighny talked with him and concluded that he was a good character risk. He called a local bank and explained the situation, and the banker good-naturedly agreed to lend one hundred dollars for the purchase of a new horse, taking a mortgage on the team—the only property the man had worth mortgaging. Later the Indian got a Government loan and the guidance of Mr. Feighny. His progress in the ten years since that time has been almost unbelievable.

He has bought the forty acres and rents another eighty. He grows peanuts, cotton, and corn; and his terraced fields are beautifully cultivated. He lives with his thrifty wife and well dressed children in a comfortable house with butane fuel and electricity, set in a well kept lawn. There is a tractor and other farm machinery under shelter, and a sturdy old-model car in the garage. The barnyard is covered with chickens, and the cream check is a weekly asset. And all this, he and his wife have earned through the judicious use of borrowed capital and the advice of an expert in the beginning years. He needs no guidance now; he makes his own plans, and he talks to the farm management supervisor, man to man. In fact when I visited him, Mr. Feighny was asking *his* advice in a problem with a new client.

A few Seminoles are successful farm loan clients. But Mr. Feighny does not pick them up from a church yard or a cabin in the timber. For there are no Seminole settlements. All the scrub timbered waste of Seminole County was in fact a fullblood settlement, where this most conservative of the tribes lived remote from outside intercourse. Then the great oil development swept over it, leaving no area untouched. Now most of the self sustaining Seminoles are working in offices or industry. Possibly the economic salvation of this tribe does not depend on agriculture.

Everywhere the success of the agricultural program is curtailed by the shortage of farm management supervisors. Only fifteen are employed for the whole Five Tribes area. Just now some of the Indians are receiving additional farm training under the so-called G. I. Bill of Rights. Their greatest problem is in farming on a scale large enough to qualify; and here the loans under the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act are of great assistance.

But agricultural training, whether by Veterans Administration or Agency Extension Division, is obviously limited to those Indians who have access to land. For the present generation this means family land—inherited land or the allotments of older relatives. True, a few of the most successful loan clients are using the loan privilege to buy farms of their own; but this is a step far up the path of progress. No beginner can assume so large a debt. It was to help the most needy class, the completely landless Indians, that the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act carried provisions for the purchase of land.

Chapter V

LAND PURCHASES FOR THE INDIANS

The land purchased under the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act was to be held as in tribal days under communal tenure. Several tracts were acquired, which, with some small areas left over from allotment, brought the total up to thirty-six hundred acres. The land was in the fullblood settlements, and much of it was of sub-marginal quality. Every tribe except the Seminole received a share. Some of the tracts were placed in neat, tailored readiness by IRR[1] labor: small snug houses at correctly spaced intervals grouped around substantial community buildings, perfect modern replicas of the Indians' native villages. The idea was that the group itself would regulate the use of the land, collect rentals, and manage its co-operative business, just as in the old days the people tended individual plots in a communal field under the direction of the town officials.

The plan had the best chance of success among the Creeks. Through a century and a half of systematic effort the white man had finally broken up the economic base of their village system,[2] but the "town" still persisted as a social unit, holding its members—whether living in the old neighborhood, or strayed to distant states—by hidden ties. When the opportunity came to bring this organization into the open, it was a simple matter to compile a roll, hold an election, and transact community business. Three of these towns, with some technical assistance from Indian service officials, adopted constitutions and obtained charters of incorporation. Two of the three each received title to a tract of the purchased land. In the other tribes artificial community organizations were formed on a neighborhood basis.

A lively social life centers around some of these community projects, but—whether due to a natural Indian development towards individualism or to the individualistic predilections of white advisers—none has become a group economic enterprise. The tenure, the loans, and the agricultural guidance of the Indians settled on the land is based on an individual relationship with the farm management supervisor. Only in their feeling is the tribal ownership apparent. As a Chickasaw woman expressed it, "This place seems just like home."

The Cherokees in fact did not wait for any community organization. In their desperate need of land, they simply started to move on, and their claims were recognized in a more formal assignment. Fifty-seven families are living on a tract of about nine thousand mountainous acres south of

1 Indian Relief and Rehabilitation, the Indian counterpart of WPA.

2 For Creek town life and its decline see Debo, *The Road to Disappearance,* (Norman, Oklahoma, 1941) pp. 9-14, 19-26, 67-69, 111, 122-23, 291-96, 333.

Stilwell. Their attainments vary, but all are far removed from the hopeless poverty of their landless brethren.

One would never find a more attractive place in town or country than the small new-built house assigned to one Indian couple. They are of early middle age, fullbloods of limited education. Both were landless; they had been crowded into the cabin of the wife's mother, a good woman, who in spite of difficulties had trained her daughter in the old-time Cherokee housekeeping. Now their yard is perfectly kept, their house is modern in taste and furnishings, and beautifully canned fruit and vegetables are on the shelves. The man does his farming with one small, well-cared-for horse, raising fine patches of beans and strawberries. Their daughter is beginning nurses' training. They pay their tribe sixty-five dollars a year rental, but their feeling is not that of tenants, but of owners.

Farther down the road is a log cabin with a few surrounding acres in a rich spot of valley. This is the home of an elderly Cherokee couple, speaking very little English, farming in the old way, raising good corn, and filling a log storehouse with food. They pay fifteen dollars a year rental, and feel a security they have not experienced since through some sort of legal legerdemain they lost their allotments. On the edge of a wider valley is the middle-aged son of the famous Cherokee fullblood who led the tribal resistance to allotment. He and his numerous brothers and sisters are landless; for in their youth at the behest of their father they got their restrictions removed, and mortgaged (and subsequently lost) their land in order to set up a community co-operative and finance some fruitless appeals to Washington. He uses 160 acres, for which—with much grumbling, for he feels it is *his* land—he pays eighty dollars a year. Half is in cultivation, the rest in range. He is a good farmer, as his father was before him, raising corn and potatoes and feed for his stock, and running a sorghum mill; and he holds many friendly arguments with the farm management supervisor as to the relative merits of college agriculture and Cherokee signs and nature lore. His son lives close by in one of the new-built houses, and he too is prospering.

In general the Choctaws have not made effective use of their tribal tracts (though one finds exceptions even here); and plans are afoot to use them as demonstration plots for Indian students of the boarding schools and the small state agricultural college at Wilburton. But the Chickasaws, too often content to lease their allotments and starve on rentals, have made a notable success of their purchased area. It consists of 569 acres of broken land along a creek east of Ada—one of the tracts prepared for occupancy by houses and a community building. The Indians placed there were the most degraded of all Chickasaw groups, squatting in filthy hovels in disease, vice, and hopelessness on a little land still remaining in family possession. Some still live in this way, for there was not enough land to take care of the whole settlement, and they furnish an impressive demonstration of "Before" and "After." For the Indians living on the tribal tract are industrious and self

sustaining. Their comfortable little houses are not conspicuously neat and their yards are littered with rubbish, but they cultivate their fields, take care of their live stock, raise gardens, and can food. Each family pays $55 a year rental—for the difference between decadence and self respect.

Some of the purchases for the Creeks proved to be unsuitable land subject to overflow, but they have placed the best of their town-owned tracts under the same power-operated efficiency as their individual allotments. The progress of two landless brothers furnishes a good case study. In the desperate poverty of the 1930's they paid eight dollars for tax title to sixty acres of worthless wooded hillside along the North Canadian. Here they built cabins for their families and lived precariously by trapping, cutting wood, or finding a few days' work in the neighborhood. Mr. Feighny settled them on the tract acquired by their town—Alabama-Quasarte—and started them off with a loan. Now they are successful farmers by any man's standards. I have an unforgettable picture of two young sons of one of these men. They were cutting hay. A boy about ten was driving the tractor with expert mastery, while his sixteen-year-old brother was following on the mower, laying the tall bluestem out in long, even swaths. They were handsome lads, and they talked with quiet self-assurance, farm boys that would have been a credit to any community in the United States.

Other fullblood groups are asking for land. Members of the Seven Clans Society in the Cherokee hills near Proctor have even agreed to deed their allotments to the community if the United States will purchase additional land to make up a sufficient acreage. But no money is available for such purchases. The extension of this necessary measure must wait on legislation.

Chapter VI

THE SUPERVISION OF INDIVIDUAL INDIAN PROPERTY

It should be clearly understood that no Five Tribes Indian is "restricted" in person; the restrictions apply only to his land—allotted land, or land he is acquiring under guidance. There is, of course, no restriction on any property he may acquire through his own initiative. But oil royalty from a restricted allotment is restricted, and so is a farm purchased through a loan under the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act and not yet paid out. It is over this property that the Agency exercises its supervision, and this phase of Indian administration has many ramifications.

The Agency maintains a Soil and Moisture Conservation Service, with ten branch offices, each with three employees, two of whom are graduates of agricultural colleges. This is a new program, authorized about 1941, but not put into operation until after the war. It is doing effective work with the land. No Oklahoman who has seen the appalling soil wastage of his state can quarrel with that. But Oklahoma is outstanding for its participation in the soil conservation measures of the Department of Agriculture, and one wonders why Indian land requires special treatment.

In the branch office at Idabel I pulled a contract at random from the file, and later drove out to the farm. The owner is a drunkard, entirely incompetent, and the land is leased through a white guardian to a white tenant. The guardian, the lessee, and the soil conservationist worked out a plan for scientific soil building. The land like most of the farms in that section had been almost destroyed by a century of improper cultivation; and it was a pleasure to see it coming back into fertility. I inquired as to the benefit to the Indian. This was the answer: he was already receiving increased rental, and at the expiration of the five-year lease he would own a good farm instead of a poor one. But this particular soil conservationist is as capable, as conscientious, as sensitive to social values as Herbert Kinnard or Al Feighny. One felt that he and the nineteen other men of like calibre engaged in soil conservation should be released to the more difficult work of saving people. The soil would still be saved—through the leadership of a farm management supervisor and the co-operation of an Indian *farmer* qualifying for the benefits of the general soil conservation program. And the land leased to white tenants could come under the same benefits without even a reference to the Indian service.

One important reform has been effected in recent years in agricultural leasing. For more than a generation large scale operators had controlled great blocks of Indian land through unconscionable leases, forged leases, or

no lease at all, and let it to white tenants. They were so deeply entrenched in respectable financial circles and public favor that any tenant attempting to make a direct contract with the Indian owner would have found himself without credit or legal protection[1]. It was not until 1936 that Congress placed the agricultural leasing of restricted land under Agency supervision. This law applies to all land, whether allotted or inherited, owned by enrolled or unenrolled Indians of one-half or more quantum of blood.

It was necessary for the Agency to institute suits against a few of the land monopolists. One prominent citizen of a rich Washita Valley county lost about twenty-five tracts of from eighty to one hundred and sixty acres each, which he had held under fraudulent leases. The other dealers then began to surrender their illegal holdings. It was as easy as that to break up an abuse that had existed since the turn of the century. As soon as the land was clear, Agency employees assisted the Indians to make direct lease contracts. The returns jumped from nothing, or almost nothing, to adequate rentals.

I expressed a hope at the time that the Indians would also receive some training in business transactions.[2] This hope has been realized. At first they were shown the value of their recovered land and the proper terms of a lease contract. Now they are making their own leases with only the routine approval of the Agency unless there is apparent overreaching. I learned of one Choctaw mountain dweller who went out to see his land in order to make an intelligent rental contract; then when he realized for the first time how good it was, he moved out there and started to farm it. But such instances are rare. Too much land is still under lease.

Many of these Indian landowners are old enough to qualify for old-age assistance under the Social Security Act; but their possession of property makes them ineligible under Oklahoma regulations, and the restrictions forbid them to dispose of it. The state, therefore, agreed not to class a restricted allotment as a resource, and the rentals were regularly supplemented by these public grants. But late in 1947 the Federal Social Security Administration discovered the practice and vetoed it. Now a landowning Indian asking for old-age assistance is required to apply for the removal of his restrictions so that he may sell his allotment and live up the proceeds. The Agency examines each individual case. Usually the restrictions are removed—in most cases conditionally, the Agency supervising the sale and the use of the money. But if the loss of the land would work a hardship on minor children of an elderly father or on the families of squatting relatives, the application is refused. The state then classes the allotment as an "unavailable resource," and grants the assistance. The two agencies work together in perfect harmony; neither has ever made an appeal from the decision of the other. But it all adds up to the shrinkage of Indian land—the number

1 For the ramifications of this system see Debo, *And Still the Waters Run*, pp. 99-100, 106-12, 280, 335, 358.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 374.

runs about thirty applications for removal of restrictions approved each month—and this time, ironically enough, it is at the insistence of the Federal Government instead of the state.

Another field of Agency control over Indian land is in oil and gas leasing. This service formerly extended to all restricted land, but the inherited area was removed from supervision by the act of 1947. At the end of the fiscal year 1947-48 there were 267,167.95 acres under lease, and the total income that year was $536,768.21 from leases and bonuses, and $1,786,821.54 (after deducting the tax) from royalties. The Agency now holds about eleven million dollars in investments, mostly Government bonds, for individual Indians, and about two million more in current accounts. It is such figures that create the impression that all Five Tribes Indians are rich. It should be apparent, however, that it is the grotesque fortunes of a few that swell the total. About twenty have individual balances running from one hundred thousand to nearly half a million each. These are Seminoles sharing in the oil development that swept their county, Creeks with allotments in the Cushing field, and a smaller number of Choctaws and Chickasaws owning land in the west. But most Indians have a very small oil income, if any.

Agency management of this property is honest and efficient, but the Indian receives no training in its use. Most oil-rich Indians have been adjudged incompetent by the county courts and placed under guardianship, and it is these guardians that supervise their spending. The system was one of wholesale plunder when the wealth of the Indians was greater than now. The Indian Office tried to break it up, by removing this area of Indian administration from state control; and the fight that ensued between Oklahoma and the guardians on one side and the Indian Office on the other rocked all departments of the national government[3]. The state won, but the abuses have declined with the decline of Indian property, and matters have settled into an uneasy truce.

The Agency employs six probate attorneys, who have the right to intervene and protect the Indian, if necessary, in the state courts. In practice this means that the county judge usually consults them in appointing a guardian. They are honest men, but concerned with the legal rather than the social aspects of their work. It has become customary for the guardian to collect for his services 10 per cent of the money he expends for his ward. Thus, it is to his advantage to encourage excessive spending. Also it is commonly reported that some guardians make additional collections from salesmen, who inflate their prices accordingly. But the scandals of former years have disappeared.

About eighteen hundred restricted Indians of the Five Tribes are now under guardianship. About nine-tenths of them are children. Most of these own only a small amount of property, and their guardians are relatives.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 321-49, 371-72.

Their situation is not materially different from that of white children. But a few who are desirable because of their wealth are handed about as prizes without much regard for their social welfare. The remaining one-tenth are adults. Some of these are incompetent in the usual meaning of the word, others only in the sense that they lack the business training necessary to manage great, unearned wealth. And one must admit that even at its best the guardianship system does not supply that training.

The Indian Office apparently prefers to accept the system in its present innocuous form rather than to provoke the state again to controversy. It rests on a law passed by Congress in 1908, but it has little in its favor except historic precedent. At its best it is wasteful and socially unproductive: the Agency takes good care of the Indian's property, but turns his spending over to an outside agent, and then hires an attorney to watch him. If the supervision remained with the Agency, the money now spent on probate attorneys could be used in educative guidance.

The whole Agency set-up in fact is top-heavy with accountants, attorneys, adding machines, and abstractors, and short on social workers who go out among the Indians. This preoccupation with property rather than people is the legacy of the past, and it tends to overshadow the recently accepted task of rehabilitation. Here is an example:

At the time of allotment the Government segregated some coal and asphalt land belonging to the Choctaws and Chickasaws, and under an agreement made with the tribes in 1902 and ratified by Congress, undertook to sell it within three years and divide the proceeds per capita. But the policy was changed—over the protests of the Indians—and the Government itself finally purchased the land for eight and a half million dollars in 1948[4]. Now the Agency must pay out this money to the 37,794 citizens of the tribes—Indian and intermarried white—whose names appear on the rolls or to the heirs of those who have died since the enrollment started in 1898. The inheritance tangles involved in this process may be imagined. And although the payment is a clear-cut obligation of the Government, it is purely a detail of the tribal liquidation that prepared the way for Oklahoma statehood. It is not a service to the Indians.

The same may be said for much of the work with land titles. It might clarify matters in the public mind if the Agency services were frankly divided into two classes: business transactions to fit the Indians' property into the general pattern; and services carried on in behalf of the Indians themselves. The proportion of public money devoted to the former would be revealing.

4 For the history of this long-drawn-out transaction see *ibid.*, pp. 79-81, 261-65, 387-88.

Chapter VII

SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL REHABILITATION

Disease, drunkenness, crime, and general moral delinquency exist to an appalling extent in the fullblood settlements. When a family raises its economic base, there is a noticeable improvement in physical and moral well being; but this improvement has made little impression on the total situation.

The only available vital statistics are from the State Department of Health. These are incomplete as to many causes of death, but they do show the ravages of pulmonary disease. Tuberculosis ranks first as a cause of death—19.7 per cent of total deaths among Five Tribes Indians, as compared to 3.3 per cent among white Oklahomans. Pneumonia ranks third—9.9 per cent of Indian deaths to only 4.3 per cent of white. (The second cause is heart disease, which apparently practices no racial discrimination.) In statistics of infant mortality, for every one thousand live births reported of Five Tribes babies, 63 die under one year, in comparison with 35 white Oklahoma babies. Even these figures do not present the full picture in the fullblood settlements; for they are diluted by the vital statistics of successful Indians distributed among the general population.

The prevalence of tuberculosis is shockingly apparent to the visitor in the fullblood homes. One sees a small cabin in which ten persons are living, relatives, in-laws, and their children. Here two persons died recently from the disease, and the infection of the others would seem to be a certainty. In a spotlessly neat two-room cabin a brave young mother is bringing up eight children. From a pretty high school senior of nineteen, who is making herself a dress with skill and artistry, through several boys catching work at odd jobs, down to the babe in arms, they would be a credit to any home. But the rain is dripping through the leaky roof, and the father has just pulled himself up from a lung hemorrhage to go back to his day labor for a construction company. How can these children escape?

The high rate of infant mortality among these Indians is not apparent to the visitor. In almost every home the children range in stair-step gradation. Five Tribes families, like those of other slum dwellers, are certainly too large. But limiting the size by death is hardly the constructive solution.

A fair proportion of Indian babies are born in hospitals. Government hospitalization in fact is entirely adequate for the Five Tribes, though the problem of getting their sick there is sometimes beyond the resources of an Indian family. It is in the services of local doctors and public health nurses that they suffer the greatest lack. The Agency public health work is negligible—one nurse, and a few doctors in private practice treating Indians

on the side. The state public health service is inadequate for both Indians and whites. It depends upon county initiative matched with state aid, and often the poorer counties are unable to take this initiative. Several of the Choctaw, Creek, and Cherokee counties have no public health service at all. Six counties of the Cherokee hills and their borders have united to form a district, using one doctor, six nurses, and nine other employees. The work is efficiently handled, but obviously is spread very thin over four thousand square miles. Private practice is spread almost equally thin, for Oklahoma's doctors prefer to work in cities. All of Adair County had at last report only six physicians, and it is safe to assume that these find most of their patients in Stilwell.

The conservative fullbloods have never progressed far beyond the native custom that condoned sexual laxity in a girl before marriage, and some have lapsed from this into general promiscuity. There are Indian women living in remote mountain cabins or in towns whose mixed broods are multiplying as fast as nature will permit without regard to law or public opinion. But the children of these episodes are accepted and loved. The old Indian family life, in fact, has a strength of its own, and this is one of the chief assets in any plan of rehabilitation. Marriage, when it comes, is relatively stable. Although many of these unions are made without legal formality, they often last through a lifetime of good years and lean. They are accepted not only by Indian custom, but by Oklahoma law, which gives full sanction to common law marriage based only on mutual consent[1].

Illegitimate births, plus death or illness of parents swell Oklahoma's Public Assistance rolls in the poverty-stricken Indian communities. In Adair County with a Cherokee population of about five thousand, 277 Indian families with 688 children received aid to dependent children during the fiscal year 1948-49; in McCurtain County with about twenty-three hundred Choctaws, 164 families with 420 children; in Johnston County with about one thousand Chickasaws (and Choctaws) 53 families with 125 children; in McIntosh County with about two thousand Creeks, 103 families with 245 children; in Seminole County with about twenty-five hundred Seminoles (and Creeks), 117 families with 252 children. The relief load of whites runs high in some of these counties, but nothing like this[2].

There is a very general belief among the well-to-do in these communities that Public Assistance actually encourages Indian women to produce illegitimate offspring; and even the welfare workers of one Choctaw mountain county have come to the same conclusion. Although the financial inducement is small—$27 a month for one child, $18 for each additional child in the family—some unmarried mothers manage to qualify for as

1 108 Okla. 168; 162 Okla. 42; 235 Pac. 479.

2 State of Oklahoma, Department of Public Welfare, *Annual Report for the Fiscal Year, July 1, 1947—June 30, 1948,* pp. 51-52.

much as one hundred dollars a month. But any study of Indian family life will reveal a situation fully as flagrant in past years before the state and nation initiated the Public Assistance program. The latter only served to bring it out into the open.

The Agency tries to improve the home situation through its Extension service. Here the women's work consists of a supervisor and five field workers trained in home economics. Their influence is as noticeable in the Indian houses as that of the farm management supervisors is in the fields. But this training is spread too thin over the Five Tribes area. The Agency also has a Welfare Division with five women social workers, who deal with relief problems. They co-operate with state welfare agencies in helping the needy, and salvaging the children. When the home environment becomes intolerable, they pick up the children and place them in boarding schools.

The Five Tribes area has five boarding schools, which were once a part of the Indians' own educational system. Then there is the near-by Seneca school at Wyandotte, which now enrolls mostly Five Tribes pupils. In addition there is a Five Tribes enrollment of about three hundred in each of the non-reservation schools at Chilocco, Oklahoma, and at Haskell, near Lawrence, Kansas, and 160 pupils are maintained under contract in a denominational school in the Choctaw country. The total boarding school enrollment of Five Tribes young people for the year 1948-49 was 2,030.

Some of these children are from upright families; they were selected because of the death of a parent or remoteness from public school. But at present the Indian service is concentrating on a more degraded class; and the individual case cards of these new enrollees reveal unspeakably sordid conditions of parental—and incipient juvenile—delinquency. No record is kept of their life after they leave school; but in following up a number of the worst cases, I discovered some who had attained outstanding leadership, a decent, mediocre majority, and very few criminals and degenerates. It seems, however, that state welfare agencies and the Indian service might work out a policy of prevention rather than salvage. There is something wrong about the reckless propagation of children that become a public charge and can be rescued from delinquency only by expensive and specialized training.

The rest of the Five Tribes children are supposed to attend the public schools. The enrollment is approximately 6,406 children of one-fourth or more quantum of blood[3]. The state is now equipped to give them adequate schooling[4]. In the middle 1930's it initiated a policy of substantial aid to the poorer districts—where most of the Indians live—and for the past three

[3] It must again be pointed out that exact statistics are unavailable because Oklahoma Indians have lost their tribal identity. The State Department of Education lists them by counties simply as "Indians," but one can determine the tribe with approximate accuracy by their location. This enrollment is substantially smaller than the statistics of former years. Probably earlier figures were padded by local school officials anxious to qualify for federal payments. This practice has largely disappeared with closer state supervision.

[4] For the history of the merging of tribal schools into state schools and the subsequent educational losses of the Indians see Debo, *And Still the Waters Run*, pp. 66-75, 276-78, 390.

years the consolidation of districts and the transportation of pupils by motor bus has been extending rapidly into the hill settlements.

State and local taxes are supplemented by a federal grant—$320,000 in 1948-49—for the education of Five Tribes and other Indians. This is a fair charge on the Government because of the Indians' tax exempt land; but no attempt was made to concentrate it in the fullblood settlements until 1938. Now under a contract made in 1947 the state receives the money and assumes the full responsibility for all Indian education except the boarding schools. The plan is working smoothly and the schools are carrying out their task with real zeal and devotion. When a rural district in the hills is added to the consolidated area of a village school, every effort is made to fit the shy young Indians into their new experience. They join in playground activities without discrimination, and special classes are sometimes arranged to help them over their language difficulties and educational retardation. Their attendance is irregular—81 per cent of their total enrollment, and some not enrolled at all—but to the surprise of administrative officials it is about as good as that of white pupils from the same communities.

From 1932 on, and especially after the passage of the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act, loans have been made to Indian young people to enable them to attend college. The amount usually runs from seventy-five dollars to four hundred dollars a year. Twenty-five students received this help during the fiscal year 1948-49. Agency bookkeeping does not show the percentage of repayment; the totals show only the loans still outstanding. But I chose a certain date at random and traced the history of individual loans made at that time. Here the repayment was not so good as in the case of farm loans—possibly because there is no way to liquidate college training gone wrong—but an overwhelming majority of the borrowers had met their obligations. It was apparent that the defaulters were young men who had failed to attain economic stability, and girls who had married. (Anyone familiar with loans to white college students will recognize the pattern of girls who marry and default.)

Until 1949 most of the applicants had come up through the public schools; but this year boarding school graduates were in the majority. The Indian service keeps no record of their after-college careers, but something can be deduced from their addresses as they send in their payments. Teaching claims the largest number, office work probably comes next, and nursing runs a close third. It is evident that most of them are successful, while a few seem to be on their way to distinction. One has attained his doctorate from a Northern university.

Other Indians receive loans or scholarships from religious and philanthropic sources. Many more attend college through their own or family initiative without outside help. These are unknown to statistics, but their presence is plainly apparent on every Oklahoma campus. They enter fully

into student activities and graduate into the professional and business life of the general population. Many are making careers for themselves in distant states.

In general these completely adjusted Indians are scarcely aware of the backwash areas of their own tribes. But the boarding schools maintain a more direct connection with the unassimilated groups, for their graduates often return to the home community. And in one notable instance an arts and crafts course in school has broadened into a native industry. This is the spinning and weaving of the Cherokee and Choctaw hills.

Chapter VIII

MAKING TEXTILES IN THE HILLS

This craft was planned from Washington—by Dr. Willard W. Beatty, Director of Education at the Indian Office. Thus it furnishes another demonstration that the initiative in any means of self-help must come from outside the stagnated areas. Dr. Beatty selected for the work young William A. Ames of upstate New York. Ames had never seen an Indian outside a Wild West show, but he had a textile background—silk and wool—of several generations. The depression had driven him to a civil service job in Washington. Dr. Beatty persuaded him to enter the Indian service, and sent him out in 1938 as instructor in textiles at the Sequoyah school.

He designed his own looms, and the boys built them in the school shops. Of the students in his beginning classes four went on to complete a four-year course in textiles. During their last year, these four with his encouragement formed the Sequoyah Indian Weavers' Association. They obtained some raw wool from the Education Division of the Indian service, for which they agreed to pay $2,092.75, and went to work to process it. Since it would require a year or more before they could realize any income from the sale of their product, they stayed on at the school and performed services for their board and lodging. Then they were over the hump. At the end of five years they had paid themselves wages, paid off their loan, and deposited a small surplus at the bank. By this time they had expanded their membership throughout the Cherokee hills.

The women of the Five Tribes have forgotten as completely as their white sisters that they once made their clothing of skins. The Cherokees were learning to spin and weave even before the American Revolution. For two generations after they settled in Oklahoma the making of homespun clothing was a necessary part of household economy; and this tradition had never died out in the hills, where a few of the older women still remembered their girlhood skills. All this formed a promising background for the new crafts project[1].

Mr. Ames usually made his initial contact with a fullblood settlement through an Indian church. He took out some attractive samples and showed the women that *they* could make similar products. Thus weaving centers were established. Now the requests come in from the field faster than the Association can expand its services.

There are now eight weaving centers in the Cherokee hills, and one among the Choctaws. At each a building is somehow acquired, looms are

1 For the history of these household arts see Carolyn Thomas Foreman, *Cherokee Weaving and Basketry* (Muskogee, Oklahoma, 1948).

installed, and the women come there from their homes to work. The local group elects its officers, keeps its books, and runs its own business; but the parent association buys the yarn for the whole and markets the finished product. The members are paid wages for their work, but the Association pays no dividend; all profits go into the opening of new centers and the expansion of membership. Most of the yarn is produced by the Choctaws, who have formed a Choctaw Spinning Association with about thirty branches distributed through the mountains and valleys of southeastern Oklahoma. They work in their own homes, using spinning wheels furnished by the organization. Then there are local groups, both Cherokee and Choctaw, working in their homes at other crafts, especially the beautiful native basketry, which has never died out among the hill people; and their products also are sold through the Sequoyah Weavers' Association. All these add up to a total of 365 members for the whole crafts project. Then there are a few independent weavers who have purchased looms and work in their own homes.

The weavers make their own designs, and they turn out beautiful textiles, not for the collector of Indian curios, but for the luxury trade. The finest shops in the country purchase their fabrics. Every woman sitting at her spinning wheel or standing at her loom is an artist, feeling the joy of creation surging through her deft, sure movements. And their earnings have brought power washers, new stoves, and school clothes for the children to a number of hill cabins. In 1949 a total of $3,500 was paid to the weavers, $1,000 to the spinners, and $2,100 to the basket makers and the producers of other special crafts. These payments of course include the very small earnings of beginning members. The average skilled weaver or spinner, working in the time she can spare from household duties, makes about five hundred dollars a year.

Some white friends, anxious to increase production, would hold every weaver to an eight-hour-day, forty-hour-week schedule. But this would require an entirely different approach. These women are housewives, with responsibilities for home and children, plus a natural Indian disregard for time. There are occasions when it is certainly more important to can the beans than to put in a full day at the weaving center; and in the long view, perhaps the same may be true of the Baptist camp meeting. I talked with a number of these workers, simple woman to woman conversations stimulated by a common interest in household crafts. Here is a sample:

"Yes, I like to do this. I'm not very good yet, but I'm learning. The whole family helps me so I can come here. My oldest boy is as good as a girl in the house. We do up the work before I leave; then when I get back at noon the children have dinner all ready but making the bread."

Clearly factory techniques are not for such people. But the work does need expansion, for more orders are coming in than the Association can fill. The growth of the business solely through its own earnings is financially

sound, no doubt, but this policy takes no account of human needs. More instructors, more looms, more work centers could raise the living standards of many families now untouched by the program.

The training is carried on by six instructors, employees of the Education Division of the Indian service. There are three boarding school teachers, two at Sequoyah and one at Chilocco, under the supervision of Mr. Ames. Then in the field are Mr. Ames and two assistants, who go out into the communities and teach a fraction of the women clamoring to learn. Young John Ketcher of that first four-member class works out from Tahlequah. Handsome, intelligent, well-mannered, he is a credit to the school that trained him. He came to Sequoyah at the age of ten from a Cherokee hill community because both of his parents were dead and his grandparents needed help in his upbringing. Mrs. Florence LaGrande works out from Idabel to teach the spinners. She is a Sioux from South Dakota, whose parents were successful farmers; and she fits her crafts program into a larger concept of family welfare.

It is evident, in fact, that no one program is the complete answer. The Indians' problem is so complex that all the good will of many agencies is required in its solution. It may be useful at this point to examine all the forces that can be counted upon for the task.

Chapter IX

WEIGHING IMPONDERABLE ASSETS IN REHABILITATION

In all its public services—health, education, relief—Oklahoma can be trusted to minister to its Indian citizens without discrimination. Although it demanded "freedom" and "equality" for them in order to have a free hand in exploiting their property, it has been willing to go all the way. The problem of rehabilitation is beyond the financial resources of a state still young and with a relatively low income, but the good will exists and can be reckoned with in working out any Indian policy. And any Indian fitted by education and vocational skills to enter the main current of Oklahoma life encounters no discriminatory social or economic barriers.

Another asset is the fine spirit of the Agency. Once employees in the Five Tribes service owed their positions to the favor of local politicians. This meant in practice that they dared not give offense to a land dealer constituency[1]. Now they are civil service appointees with special qualifications for their diversified tasks; and moreover, the exploitation of Indians is no longer a dominant influence in Oklahoma politics. Their only lack, as I observed it, is their unfamiliarity with the past history and institutions of the people they serve. In the education office at the Agency are about 1637 children's books and about 330 books on teaching practice, but not one of the many scholarly books on the Five Tribes. It was a little disconcerting to find only one person in the office or the field who had ever heard of my own study upon which the request for the present report was based. But the Agency can be trusted in its ideals of service, its on-the-spot decisions, its recommendations.

Once Indian organizations were discouraged, as a part of the general policy of tribal liquidation. It is typical of the tenacity of Indian character that they continued to function underground. Now they are accorded a respectful hearing, even though this involves some patient unraveling of the fullblood mind. Even the tribal governments have been revived to a limited extent for advisory purposes. Each tribe has a chief, nominally appointed by the President, but actually in most cases chosen by the Indians; and these men are consulted in formulating Indian policy. I was privileged to sit in at a meeting of tribal representatives in the Agency office; and it was very clear that it was they who had called it and decided on the agenda.

Another institution that might be expected to exert a strong influence in rehabilitation is the church. The Presbyterians, Methodists, and Baptists have a really heroic history of missionary work for the Five Tribes. They made these Indians a Christian people, assisted in their educational efforts, and helped them bridge the gap between the lost native ways and the

1 See for example Debo, *And Still the Waters Run*, pp. 318-23.

happy progress of "Indian Territory" days. In view of this, one hesitates to state that their work now is largely futile. Except for a few individual ministers they are completely oblivious to the Indians' economic life.

The Indians love their churches. Except for a few pagan remnants of Creek worship, and a branch of the Cherokee fullblood Kee-too-wah Society which has consciously turned from Christianity and revived the ancient rituals, they are completely Christianized. Individuals may violate Christian principles of conduct or drift away from church attendance, but all have a basic Christian faith. It is a moving experience to attend their services. The building may be a tiny log cabin hidden in the timber; the minister is probably a fullblood, speaking in the native language and courteously translating for the visitor; and the singing goes on and on, rising and falling in wild cadences, beautiful as the dawn of human aspiration.

Nobody could deny the Indians this solace. And nobody could deny them the camp meetings and eating on the grounds that fill their social needs. But religious leaders, especially white leaders, could make some effort to adjust these gatherings to the facts of economic life. The Indians certainly should not be encouraged to make the rounds from meeting to meeting, neglecting their growing crops, and using their winter's supply of food in hospitable entertainment. The Agency extension workers—who in most cases are active members of churches—actually have to combat the demoralizing influence of these religious gatherings.

It is the universal experience of Public Assistance case workers in the Choctaw and Chickasaw counties that the permanent settlements on the church grounds are the worst centers of moral laxity and economic apathy. Here are the people content to propagate illegitimate children, while they live on relief and neglect even to plant a garden. The church may be the center of an active group of spinners, but the workers come from the surrounding area, not from the dwellers on the grounds. And I failed to find a single family of this background, which had become a successful client of the farm loan program. The church could not be expected to deny this refuge to homeless people, but it could recognize its problem and assume some responsibility for their conduct.

All this does not mean that Christianity has no uplifting influence upon Five Tribes Indians. In the neatest homes one finds well-worn Bibles; a Christian spirit is clearly in evidence in the best ordered family life; and the most industrious farmers are leaders of their various churches. It is only that the strong attachment of the Indians to their churches could be —if it were recognized and used—a mighty factor in their economic betterment. The way is open for a practical-minded minister, Indian or white, to enter an Indian community and do what the Hunts did for Lyons Switch. It would require no more and no less devotion and social sensitivity than one finds in the field workers of the Government Indian service. There are, however, no present plans to establish such centers in the Five Tribes area.

Chapter X

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

In summing up the findings of the survey several facts are apparent. The fullblood settlements present a picture of appalling social and economic degradation, relieved only in spots by the rehabilitation program. But it has been clearly demonstrated that the Indians do respond to agricultural opportunities, that they do benefit by educational training. These facts fit the long-range objectives: an adequate agriculture for those who stay on the land; social and economic self sufficiency for those who enter other fields of employment. To help in the attainment of these goals are the guidance of an Indian service, devoted and socially sensitive; good will and complete acceptance by the general citizenship of Oklahoma; and the patience and tenacity of the Indian spirit.

A number of specific means in the attainment of these larger ends may be pointed out. The loss of land must be stopped. In my opinion this could best be done by the purchase of tribal tracts to balance individual sales. It would require appropriation of public money, but the amount would be relatively small and the land itself would remain as security for the investment. The number of extension workers—farm management supervisors and home economists—should be increased. Probably this could be done without additional appropriations by abolishing the Soil Conservation Service and reducing the number of other employees. An enlargement of the extension service would of course enable more Indians to benefit from the loan policy and would require a corresponding increase of the revolving loan fund, but in view of the record of repayment, this could certainly be classed as an excellent public investment. Finally, the spinning and weaving project should be extended. The Indians have the market and the will to supply it; they lack only equipment and the opportunity for training.

In my opinion the Agency rather than the county courts should supervise the money it collects for individual Indians. The salaries now paid to probate attorneys to protect the Indians from the guardians could then be used for more constructive purposes. In all possible ways the Agency services in protecting the Indians' property should be subordinated to training of the Indians; in cases where these services are in the interest of good land titles, that fact should be clearly recognized, and fees could be charged. (There is of course no way of evading such socially unproductive responsibilities as the per capita payments from the sale of the Choctaw-

Chickasaw mineral land; this is simply the belated fulfilment of an agreement made in 1902.)

These measures would improve the economic situation. And the Indians' worst problem is economic. Many of their social ills disappear with the improvement of their living standards. There is need, however, for working out a better health system, probably through some arrangement with the state. The educational system, which seems so promising, may—in the absence of scientific study—be resting on false assumptions. The colleges are filled with candidates for doctorial degrees in education, hunting subjects for dissertations; surely some could be enlisted in weighing the results of various types of schooling for Indians, and their findings could be used in formulating educational policies. (Needless to say, such studies should be read and used.) The complex problem of parental delinquency should be explored further; perhaps the state welfare workers and the Indian service could discover a more permanent solution than salvaging the children through boarding schools. And the churches somehow should be made aware of the superficiality of their present efforts.

For in spite of the hopeful progress of the past thirteeen years, it is by no means certain that rehabilitation of the Five Tribes Indians will be undertaken on a scale sufficient for ultimate success. The results achieved thus far only point the way. The alternative—and this alternative is fearfully imminent—is the reduction of these once great peoples to a hopeless, homeless pauper class, a menace to the health and morals of the society that failed to assimilate them. The American conscience will never tolerate a systematic extermination of unsuccessful racial groups; but will it ignore a series of acts that reduced them to degradation? More than the welfare of a few thousand Indians is at stake. It is a matter of national good faith.

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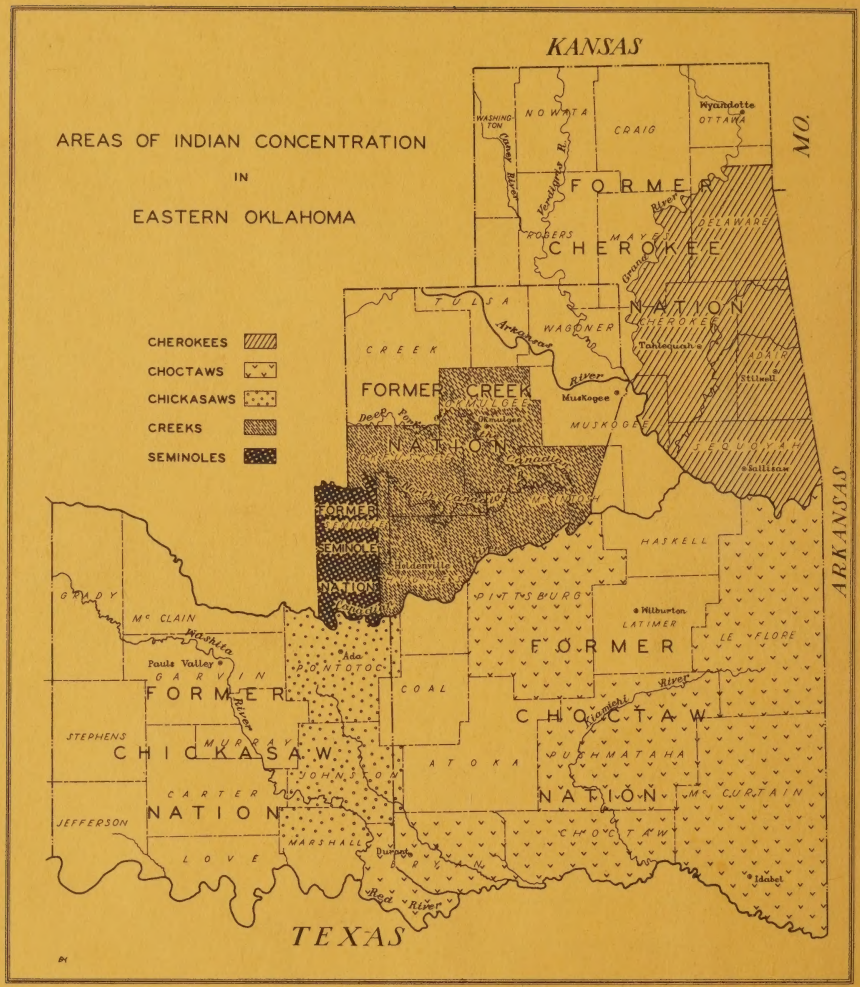
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